

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
HEADQUARTERS TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTER
WASHINGTON DC

COMMAND : COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC
INFO : G-OP, G-OCC, G-OCS, G-SCT, G-OPR, G-OPF, G-CPA, SUPR
AIG\CAD : AIG ONE ONE NINE TWO NINE
SSIC : N16101

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FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//G-OP/G-OCC/G-OCS/G-SCT//
TO AIG ONE ONE NINE TWO NINE
COGARD CAMSLANT CHESAPEAKE VA
COGARD CAMSPAC PT REYES CA
COGARD COMMSTA KODIAK AK
INFO COGARD TISCOM ALEXANDRIA VA//SD/ENG/OPS/ENG3//
BT

UNCLAS //N16101//

SUBJ: COAST GUARD RESPONSE POLICY FOR HF/MF DIGITAL SELECTIVE
CALLING (DSC)

A. DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING OPERATIONS DOCTRINE, COMDTINST 16121.1

B. COAST GUARD ADDENDUM TO THE NATIONAL SAR MANUAL, COMDTINST
M16130.2B

C. SARMIS MANUAL, COMDTINST M5230.10A

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO PROVIDE OPERATIONAL SHORE UNITS
WITH INTERIM POLICY GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO HF AND MF DSC DISTRESS
ALERTS. THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO UPDATES OF REFERENCES
A AND B.

2. COORDINATION. DSC IS UNIQUE, IN THAT DISTRESS COMMUNICATIONS ARE
INITIATED BY DIGITAL DATA BURSTS THAT ARE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED, BUT ALL
FOLLOW-UP COMMUNICATIONS ARE TYPICALLY HANDLED BY VOICE.
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ITU) REGULATIONS REQUIRE EACH
UNIT THAT RECEIVES A DSC ALERT OR RELAY TO SEND AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT,
EVEN IF OTHER UNITS ARE ALREADY KNOWN TO HAVE DONE SO. AS SUCH, IT
IS PROBABLE THAT MULTIPLE GROUPS, ALONG WITH THE APPROPRIATE
COMMUNICATIONS AREA MASTER STATION (CAMS), WILL RECEIVE AND
ACKNOWLEDGE THE SAME MF DSC ALERT. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE SAME
DISTRESS ALERT MAY BE RECEIVED ON BOTH HF AND MF BANDS. FOR THESE
REASONS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT COAST GUARD UNITS COMMUNICATE WITH ONE
ANOTHER AND WITH THE DEFAULT SAR MISSION COORDINATOR (SMC) TO ENSURE
ROLE CLARITY DURING DSC CASE PROSECUTION.

3. INITIAL ACTION. ALL SHORE-BASED UNITS THAT RECEIVE A DSC DISTRESS
CALL SHALL COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

A. ACKNOWLEDGE THE CALL. SHORE UNITS SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE ALL DSC
DISTRESS ALERTS AND RELAYS BEFORE TAKING ANY FURTHER ACTION.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS SHALL BE MADE VIA DSC ON THE SAME FREQUENCY ON WHICH
THE ALERT OR RELAY WAS RECEIVED, AND SHALL TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS
PRACTICABLE, AND IN ALL CASES WITHIN 2.75 MINUTES OF RECEIPT IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ITU REGULATIONS. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT DOES NOT IMPLY
ASSUMPTION OF SMC BY THE ACKNOWLEDGING UNIT. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SIMPLY
MEANS THE DSC CALL HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY A SHORE UNIT, AND THE U. S.
COAST GUARD IS RESPONDING TO IT.

B. MONITOR THE CORRESPONDING VOICE FREQUENCY. EACH RECEIVING UNIT
SHALL MONITOR THE CORRESPONDING VOICE FREQUENCY FOR AT LEAST 10
MINUTES, OR UNTIL FOLLOW-UP COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE DISTRESSED

VESSEL AND THE COAST GUARD ARE ESTABLISHED.

C. NOTIFY SMC. EACH RECEIVING UNIT SHALL NOTIFY THE APPROPRIATE DEFAULT SMC AS OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF THIS MESSAGE. SUCH NOTIFICATION WILL TAKE PLACE CONCURRENT WITH THE 10 MINUTE MONITORING PERIOD MENTIONED ABOVE.

D. SIMPLEX TELETYPE OVER RADIO (SITOR) RESPONSE. IN THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE A GROUP RECEIVES A REQUEST TO RESPOND VIA SITOR INSTEAD OF VOICE, THEY SHALL IMMEDIATELY INFORM THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICT COMMAND CENTER, WHO WILL IN TURN PASS THE SITOR REQUEST TO THE APPROPRIATE CAMS.

4. PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER.

A. FOR ALL HF DSC CALLS, THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER SHALL BE THE APPROPRIATE CAMS. FOR MF DSC CALLS WHERE A POSITION IS KNOWN, THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER SHALL BE THE GROUP WITHIN WHOSE AOR THE DISTRESSED VESSEL IS LOCATED. THESE UNITS SHALL HAVE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE A VOICE RESPONSE IF THE DISTRESSED VESSEL DOES NOT PROMPTLY COME UP ON THE CORRESPONDING VOICE FREQUENCY. THE PRIMARY RESPONDER SHALL MAKE A SINGLE CALLOUT TO THE VESSEL IN DISTRESS ON THE APPROPRIATE VOICE FREQUENCY, USING ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THE DSC ALERT TO IDENTIFY THE VESSEL. THIS INFORMATION MAY INCLUDE THE VESSEL'S POSITION, NATURE OF DISTRESS, OR MARITIME MOBILE SERVICE IDENTITY (MMSI) NUMBER. IF COMMUNICATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED, THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER SHALL VERIFY THAT A DISTRESS SITUATION EXISTS, VERIFY THE VESSEL'S POSITION IF POSSIBLE, AND NOTIFY THE APPROPRIATE DEFAULT SMC AS OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF THIS MESSAGE.

B. IF THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER IS UNABLE TO ESTABLISH COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL AFTER MAKING THE VOICE CALLOUT AND MONITORING THE VOICE FREQUENCY FOR 5 MINUTES, THE PRIMARY RESPONDER SHALL SEND A SINGLE POINT DSC CALL TO THE DISTRESSED VESSEL'S MMSI NUMBER, DISTRESS PRIORITY. IF THEY ARE ABLE, THE CREW OF THE DISTRESSED VESSEL SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THE DSC CALL, TUNE UP A VOICE FREQUENCY, AND ANSWER.

C. FAILURE TO ESTABLISH COMMS. IF COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED BY THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER AFTER FOLLOWING THE STEPS OUTLINED ABOVE, NOTIFICATION OF SUCH WILL BE MADE TO THE DEFAULT SMC. ONLY THE SMC CAN MAKE THE DETERMINATION THAT A DSC DISTRESS ALERT IS A PROBABLE FALSE ALERT.

D. MF DSC CASES WITH NO POSITION. FOR MF DSC CASES WHERE NO POSITION INFORMATION IS KNOWN, AND FOR CASES WHERE THE POSITION OF THE DISTRESSED VESSEL FALLS OUTSIDE THE AOR OF ANY GROUP WITH DSC CAPABILITY, THE 10 MINUTE MONITORING PERIOD FOR ALL RECEIVING UNITS REMAINS IN EFFECT. IF NO COMMUNICATIONS ARE HEARD FROM THE DISTRESSED VESSEL, THE SMC MAY DIRECT A SPECIFIC UNIT THAT RECEIVED THE ALERT TO ASSUME THE PRIMARY VOICE RESPONDER FUNCTION.

5. SMC DETERMINATION.

A. AREA COMMAND CENTERS SHALL BE THE DEFAULT SMC FOR ALL HF DSC DISTRESS CALLS. CAMS SHALL NOTIFY (BY TELEPHONE, WITH FOLLOW-UP VIA FAX OR MESSAGE) THE AREA COMMAND CENTER UPON THE RECEIPT OF ALL HF (AND MF) DSC DISTRESS CALLS

B. DISTRICT COMMAND CENTERS SHALL BE THE DEFAULT SMC FOR ALL MF DSC DISTRESS CALLS. GROUPS SHALL NOTIFY (BY TELEPHONE, WITH FOLLOW-UP VIA FAX OR MESSAGE) THEIR PARENT DISTRICT COMMAND CENTER UPON RECEIPT OF ALL MF DSC DISTRESS CALLS.

C. AS THIS POLICY INTENDS DISTRICT COMMAND CENTERS TO BE THE DEFAULT SMC FOR MF DSC CASES, AREA COMMAND CENTERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE

APPROPRIATE DISTRICT IS NOTIFIED WHENEVER THE AREA IS INFORMED OF THE RECEIPT OF AN MF DSC DISTRESS CALL FROM ITS CAMS.

D. IN THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE GROUPS RECEIVE MF DSC DISTRESS CALLS REQUESTING A SITOP RESPONSE, THEY SHALL INDICATE THIS IN THEIR INITIAL NOTIFICATION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICT COMMAND CENTER. IN THIS SITUATION, THE AREA AND DISTRICT COMMAND CENTERS SHALL JOINTLY DETERMINE SMC ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, AND COMMUNICATIONS SHALL BE HANDLED BY THE APPLICABLE CAMS.

E. IN THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE IT IS DETERMINED BY THE CAMS THAT THE SAME DSC DISTRESS ALERT HAS BEEN RECEIVED ON BOTH THE HF AND MF BANDS, THEY SHALL INDICATE THIS IN THEIR INITIAL NOTIFICATION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE AREA COMMAND CENTER. IN THIS SITUATION, THE AREA AND DISTRICT COMMAND CENTERS SHALL JOINTLY DETERMINE SMC ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.

6. DELEGATION OF SMC. AREA COMMAND CENTERS SHOULD NOT NORMALLY DELEGATE SMC FOR HF DSC DISTRESS CASES. AS EXPLAINED ABOVE, HOWEVER, AREA COMMAND CENTERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE APPROPRIATE DISTRICT IS INFORMED OF THE RECEIPT OF MF DSC CALLS REPORTED BY THE CAMS. DISTRICTS MAY DELEGATE SMC TO NO LOWER THAN THE GROUP LEVEL FOR ONLY THOSE MF DSC CASES WHERE (1) THE POSITION OF THE DISTRESSED VESSEL IS KNOWN, AND (2) COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED.

7. SMC RESPONSIBILITIES. DSC IS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED DISTRESS ALERTING SYSTEM, AND, AS SUCH, DSC INITIATED DISTRESS CALLS SHALL BE IMMEDIATELY PLACED IN THE "DISTRESS" EMERGENCY PHASE. THE FIRST PRIORITIES OF THE DEFAULT SMC ARE TO DETERMINE IF COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL, AND TO PLOT THE DISTRESSED VESSEL'S POSITION, IF KNOWN. FOR DSC DISTRESS CASES OUTSIDE OF THE US AREA OF SAR RESPONSIBILITY, THE DEFAULT SMC SHALL TRANSFER SMC TO THE APPROPRIATE FOREIGN RCC. IF COMMUNICATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED, AND THE DISTRESSED VESSEL IS IN THE SMC'S AOR, THE CASE SHALL BE PROSECUTED ACCORDING TO EXISTING SAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES. FOR DISTRICTS COORDINATING MF DSC CASES, THE DISTRICT SHOULD DETERMINE WHICH GROUP WILL HANDLE VOICE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL, AS MULTIPLE GROUPS MAY HAVE RECEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED THE INITIAL MF DSC ALERT. USUALLY, THE GROUP IN WHOSE AOR THE DISTRESSED VESSEL IS LOCATED SHOULD BE TASKED TO COORDINATE FOLLOW-UP COMMUNICATIONS. IF COMMUNICATIONS CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED, THE DEFAULT SMC SHOULD USE THE VESSEL'S MMSI TO QUERY THE "SAR ID" DATABASE AT OSC MARTINSBURG, AND/OR THE "MARITIME MOBILE ACCESS AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM (MARS)" DATABASE LOCATED ON THE ITU'S WEBSITE. THE MMSI NUMBER CAN BE USED WITH EITHER DATABASE TO HELP DETERMINE THE VESSEL'S IDENTITY AND ANY OTHER POSSIBLE MEANS OF CONTACTING THE VESSEL (SUCH AS AN INMARSAT NUMBER). WHERE NO COMMUNICATIONS ARE POSSIBLE, BUT A POSITION IS PROVIDED VIA DSC THAT IS INSIDE THE SMC AOR, ASSETS SHOULD BE DISPATCHED TO INVESTIGATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

8. CASE CLAIMING AND CASE SUSPENSION. UNITS SHALL CLAIM CASES FOR DSC INITIATED DISTRESS CALLS ACCORDING TO THE EXISTING GUIDELINES IN CHAPTER 3 OF REFERENCE C. GENERALLY, A CASE SHALL BE CLAIMED AND A SARMIS REPORT MADE BY ALL UNITS THAT DISPATCH RESOURCES, AND BY UNITS THAT EXPEND AT LEAST 30 MINUTES OF EFFORT IN COORDINATION/COMMUNICATIONS. NORMAL SAR CASE SUSPENSION PROCEDURES APPLY FOR THOSE DSC INITIATED DISTRESS CASES WHERE (1) NO COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESSED VESSEL CAN BE ESTABLISHED, (2) NO FURTHER INFORMATION OR MEANS OF CONTACTING THE VESSEL CAN BE OBTAINED

FROM EITHER DATABASE SOURCES OR OTHER SOURCES, AND (3) NO POSITION INFORMATION IS KNOWN.

9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. THE COLLECTION OF DSC STATISTICS IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL AS WE ATTEMPT TO MEASURE BOTH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DSC AS A DISTRESS ALERTING MECHANISM, AND THE VOLUME OF CALLS BEING GENERATED BY THIS NEW SYSTEM. SARMIS II INCORPORATES DSC AS A METHOD OF NOTIFICATION, AND DETAILED SARMIS II ENTRIES BY SMCS ARE CRUCIAL TO THIS STATISTICAL GATHERING PROCESS. ALTHOUGH SARMIS II WILL ALLOW US TO MEASURE CASE SPECIFIC DSC DATA, A SEPARATE REPORTING MECHANISM IS NEEDED IN THE SHORT TERM TO COLLECT OTHER CRUCIAL DATA, INCLUDING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DSC CALLS (DISTRESS AND NON-DISTRESS) RECEIVED BY UNITS EQUIPPED WITH DSC.

A. AS SUCH, UNITS EQUIPPED WITH THE SWII DSC SYSTEM AND SOFTWARE PATCH (CAMS AND GROUPS) WILL MAINTAIN A LOG OF THE FOLLOWING DATA, BROKEN DOWN BY MONTH:

TOTAL NUMBER OF DSC CALLS

TOTAL DSC DISTRESS CALLS

TOTAL DSC DISTRESS RELAYS

TOTAL DSC URGENCY CALLS

TOTAL DSC SAFETY CALLS

TOTAL DSC ROUTINE CALLS

TOTAL DSC OTHER CALLS

SINCE THE SWII SOFTWARE PATCH WILL HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF AUTOMATICALLY GENERATING THIS STATISTICAL INFORMATION, THIS REQUIREMENT WILL GO INTO EFFECT FOR CAMS AND GROUPS ONLY UPON INSTALLATION OF THE SWII SOFTWARE PATCH.

B. AREAS AND DISTRICTS MAY ESTABLISH THEIR OWN PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF THIS STATISTICAL DATA, BUT ALL INPUT SHALL BE FORWARDED BY E-MAIL TO CGCOMMS@COMDT.USCG.MIL NO LATER THAN THE TENTH DAY OF THE MONTH FOLLOWING THE MONTH BEING REPORTED.

10. PROCESS IMPROVEMENT. ALL FIELD UNITS WITH DSC ARE ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE INPUT TO G-OPR AND G-SCT VIA THEIR OPERATIONAL COMMANDER ON ANY PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH DSC OR ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE POLICY OUTLINED IN THIS MESSAGE.

11. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN COORDINATED WITH G-SCT.

12. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

13. RELEASED BY RADM TERRY M. CROSS, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS POLICY.

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